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**SUPERVISION AND EVALUATION: PRINCIPALS' WORST
NIGHTMARE**

Kashan Ishaq, M.Ed.

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PhD Student in Educational Leadership

Whitlowe R. Green College of Education

Prairie View A&M University

Principal

Iman Academy SW - Houston, TX – Private SACS Accredited School

William Allan Kritsonis, PhD

Professor & Faculty Mentor

PhD Program in Educational Leadership

Hall of Honor (2008)

William H. Parker Leadership Academy

Whitlowe R. Green College of Education

Prairie View A&M University

The Texas A&M University System

Visiting lecturer (2005)

Oxford Round Table

University of Oxford, Oxford, England

Distinguished Alumnus (2004)

College of Education and Professional Studies

Central Washing University

ABSTRACT

The success of an educational institution is directly impacted by the competency of its administration. Improvement heavily relies on the leaders' ability to creatively improvise and make valuable decisions that are in the best interest of the children. Effective evaluation of teachers requires administrators with a decade of strong classroom experience. Administrators

must understand and comprehend the needs of the children during teacher evaluation. School administrators cannot be effective without practicing instructional leadership skills themselves. Principals are the master teachers and valuable mentors.

Introduction

Personnel issues are never too easy to resolve without the principal's ability to creatively think and vision fundamentally. Many administrators lack the ability to think outside the box and therefore, fail in resolving personnel issues independently. These administrators tend to make drastic decisions without knowing the legalities of the law. Personnel issues are broad and require administrators' extensive knowledge of each issue. The school administrators should mitigate the risk of destroying the deep-rooted values and vision of an organization through objective evaluation of the impact of each decision.

In an effort to improve performance, each profession requires the objective evaluation of personnel involved. The evaluation of teachers' performance is specifically critical due to the high risk of comprising the future of several hundred young minds. Evaluation of teachers, using the district's evaluation system, helps in improving the educational standards as well as the teacher's performance.

Purpose of the Article

The purpose of this article is to discuss the role of administrator's in resolving personnel issues; and outline the necessary measures that aid in prevention. The objective is achieved through examining court cases and exploring the administrators' negligence in dealing with personnel matters.

Personnel Do Matter

Personnel evaluation systems must be cohesive and well planned, exploring each legal matter that can be resolved without costing millions of dollars to the organization.

Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS) help the schools meet rigorous standards of performance, ensuring that all students have access to quality instruction in an environment that is challenging, appropriate, and safe. Term Contract Non renewal Act (TCNA) of 1981 requires that teachers serving under a term contract be evaluated and results documented at least once a year, giving the option to the district of using their choice of system (Walsh, Kemerer & Maniotis, 2005, p. 184). Further reforms were passed and changes were made to the evaluation system, and finally PDAS was implemented and it is the current evaluation system used by majority of school districts in Texas. In *Miller V. Clyde ISD*, the administrator rated a teacher below expectations in four domains based on a single factor, failure to provide phonics instruction for two months. Miller appealed to the TEA stating that since the law requires each domain to be rated “independently”, it was improper for a principal to evaluate four domains relying on a single factor. The commissioner disagreed with the line of reasoning. A good majority of administrators fail to look ahead; and neglect the application of the postmodernism theory while taking key decisions.

According to English (2003),

Postmodernism is about constructing a way of looking at the world of ideas, concepts and systems of thought through the historicity of context and the shifting

nature of linguistic meaning and symbols as they are manifested in discursive practices which run through educational administration and related fields. (p.3)

This confirms that it is essential to think beyond modernism ways of dealing with students and stakeholders of educational institutions. Equally essential is the need to satisfy the needs of all stakeholders, ensuring their involvement in the decision making process with regards to campus improvement planning. School administrators have a tendency to reside within their comfort zone; and therefore hesitate and willingly overlook ideas when it comes to changing the system of the institution. It is essential that every supervisor document each classroom visit and observations of a teacher; and provide feedback in a timely manner. According to Walsh, Kemerer & Maniotis (2005), PDAS enforces administrators to complete documentation in a timely manner. Any incidents that may affect a teacher's rating should be verified, documented, and shared with the teacher promptly. In Koehler vs. La Grange ISD, the commissioner invalidated an entire appraisal due to the supervisor's failure to document and share the two incidents that adversely impacted the teacher's appraisal. Administrators must document the incident and share the incident with the teacher within ten working days of the appraiser's knowledge of the incident (Walsh, Kemerer & Maniotis, p.186).

Evaluating Teachers to Improve Standards of Education

Why do problems still exist in our educational standards today? If we can resolve these problems and take measures holistically through effective use of the evaluation system in improving educational standards of our schools, the issue of teachers' limited professional growth can be eliminated. English (2003) states: "The mental baggage of modernism is represented in the way it conceives of itself as a compelling singularity: total, final and absolute"

(English, 2003, p.62). School administrators with a tunnel vision tend not to think beyond modernism, finding everything absolute to avoid changes. Most teachers think with a tunnel vision; they do minimum to get the teaching done. For example, teaching students to pass the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test, while not challenging students' minds to think at a higher level. Students are less challenged in the classrooms and are given busy work to minimize disruptions. A school with such a vision instilled into the minds of teachers and administrators' can only be considered a disaster for future societies. This school may become exemplary based on the test results recognized by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) standards; however, the ability of the students may be strictly limited to passing the standardized test.

English said, "Postmodernism is not so much interested in the answers as the questions" (English, 2003, p.4). We must question our educational leaders and ourselves as to why problems still exist in our educational system today? We must demand solutions while collaboratively developing innovative thinking that postmodernism enforces. English (2003) states: "Postmodernism reveals this blind spot, and as it does so, new directions, possibilities, and understanding about people, leaders, schools and society can be forged" (English, p. 59). This leads to a fundamental question: Where have we gone wrong in our modernistic approach?

Schools administrators that are familiar with the PDAS evaluation system; and use it effectively to improve the educational standards; have a post modernistic approach in ensuring that the school performs beyond exemplary standards defined by the TEA. Local systems within an institution must ensure objective and thorough evaluations of personnel

involved. Walsh, Kemerer & Maniotis (2005), described PDAS as an evaluation system for teachers based on observable, job-related behaviors. It involves a single appraisal by a single appraiser, assessing performance in eight “Domains.” The eight “Domains” in the PDAS are (1) active, successful student participation in the learning process; (2) learner-centered instruction; (3) evaluation of, and feedback on student progress; (4) management of student discipline, instructional strategies, time, and materials; (5) professional communication; (6) professional development; (7) compliance with policies, operating procedures, and requirements; and (8) improvement of academic performance of all students on the campus, based on the indicators included in the Academic Excellence Indicator System. In each Domain each teacher is rated as (1) exceeds expectations; (2) proficient; (3) below expectations or (4) unsatisfactory. Each domain must be rated independently. Teachers identified as needing assistance due to unsatisfactory performance in two or more domains must have a development plan; including not only trainings for the teacher but an opportunity to self-reflect in his or her abilities and skills. Ineffective administrators fail to identify the specific needs of the teacher, and therefore are unable resolve the issue at hand. Instead, teachers are often forced to attend trainings that are unrelated to their specific needs; rather than providing individualized action plan addressing their deficiencies. Most administrators successfully camouflage themselves with phony justifications and keep themselves from being held accountable to their superiors by assigning ineffective growth plans to teachers, without monitoring the effectiveness of such plans. This shows that the growth plans assigned are merely to justify the poor TAKS scores, rather than being focused on the teachers’ development. In an effort to avoid such manipulation of accountability, superintendents

should continually measure the effectiveness and alignment of growth plans to the actual needs of the teacher. With such support, teachers often decide to switch school districts and not return, and novice teachers switch to another career. School administrators can either develop teachers or destroy teachers. Administrators should be held accountable for measuring the effectiveness of such growth plans. Superintendents should have the ability to understand issues from teachers' perspective; and encourage feedback from teachers in order to get realistic facts about the support that they have received.

In Taylor v. Wichita Falls I.S.D. (2002) case cited according to Walsh, Kemerer & Maniotis (2005), the school district agreed with the teacher that certain incidents had not been promptly documented and shared with the teacher, and therefore, could not be used in connection with the PDAS appraisal. The teacher filed a grievance requesting that the information not be used by the school in any way, therefore, the commissioner rules that the school was not obligated to go that far (Walsh, Kemerer & Maniotis, p.186). Administrators' job can become a nightmare if they lack skills required in documenting incidents, complaints, and any other information that may be useful as an evidence to prevent the negligence on behalf of administrators during the trial at the court.

Professional Development of Teachers

Professional development of teachers is an ongoing process towards the improvement of students' achievement. Professional development activities help educators in developing the skills and knowledge required to achieve education goals and fulfilling needs of students. Why is it that, even with all the professional development trainings provided to the teachers, the improvement in the student achievement is still questionable? School administrators are

responsible to seek skills required in identifying critical problems during training workshops that are provided. Most power point presentations and collaborative discussions during the workshops do not cater to the needs of the children. Such workshops cost a fortune to the taxpayers and school districts alike; and the results are disturbing. District administrators provide support in organizing, managing, and overseeing professional development.

According to Lam, Chambers & Mahitivanichcha (2008), experts believe that strong instructional leadership and coordinated management are important in ensuring that high-quality professional development (Lam, chambers, & Mahitivanichcha, 2008, p.18).

Professional development trainers should be evaluated based on their delivery of presentations and their ability to keep teachers engaged throughout the training. Porter, Garet, Desimone, Yoon, & Birman (2000) stated: “ Professional development focused on specific, higher-order teaching strategies increase teachers’ use of those strategies in the classroom” (Porter, Garet, Desimone, Yoon, & Birman, 2000, p .5). Educational problems exist with instructional leaders that have been out of the classroom for over a decade due to their limited knowledge regarding the content that is being taught in the classroom. They are unfamiliar with the curriculum and instructional strategies. These administrators hold a major responsibility for students’ failure.

Teachers complain about not having enough time as they are overwhelmed by the amount of meetings they are required to attend, leaving little time to plan effective lessons for the students. Teachers often complain about not having enough time to grade papers and assignments. Students lack proper feedback from the teachers, and teachers do not get the time to look into details of each students’ work and assignments to identify the thinking gap

in the children. State laws set forth demarcations on benefits with which school district must comply. For example, each classroom teacher is mandated to have at least 450 minutes of instructional preparation for every two-week period of instruction; including parent-teacher conferences, evaluating students' work, and planning. Each planning and preparation period must be at least 45 minutes long, and must be scheduled during the school day. According to Walsh, Kemerer & Maniotis (2005), during the planning and preparation period, teachers may not be required to participate in any other activity. In *Strater v. Houston I.S.D.*, (1986), the commissioner has ruled that a district may not require a teacher to attend in-service meeting during the teacher's planning period. Also, Texas Education Code enforces that teachers shall not be required to attend in-service meetings during the 45-minute planning period.

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, administrators have a vital role in ensuring all laws and regulations are being enforced, as well as followed by every member of the school community. Competent administrators that are aware of personnel issues, laws and regulations can independently take better decisions that are in the best interest of the children, while minimizing the risk of law suits. Schools tend to have poor teacher turnover rates when administrators are insensitive to personnel matters, and incompetent in understanding the needs of the faculty and staff.

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